Shades of Me: An Examination of Ethnic Identity

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

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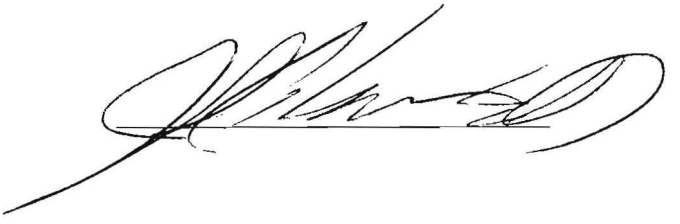

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Abstract

The question "Who Am I?" has been part of the human consciousness for as long as our species has existed. This concept is complicated, however, by the addition of personally and socially constructed ethnic identity. Daunting as it may be, ethnic identity is as important for an individual's social persona as it is for his or her psychological wellbeing. Current social trends show an increase in ethnic identification among Americans despite a weakening of ethnic boundaries through the emergence of a multiethnic demographic. Research shows that the ethnic identities promoted by these multiethnic individuals and others who identify as multicultural may be the most psychologically beneficial of all ethnic self-concepts. Through an exploration of current literature, this thesis sheds light on the process and significance of ethnic identity and examines my experience as a multiethnic individual developing an ethnic self-concept.

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Shades of Me

An individual's ethnic identity is a complex concept that strives to answer not only the age-old question, "Who Am I?" but also, "What Am I?" The challenges of this pursuit, which are well known to ethnic minority group members such as myself, stem from the intricate nature of identity as a personal choice and a socially constructed designation, as well as complications in ascertaining the individual's self-concept through *ethnically*, *culturally*, or other similarly colored-lenses. The first step in solving the ethnic identity dilemma is to understand the parameters of the challenge.

Identity is an internalized concept based on experiences. It is "determined by the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental characteristics, and interactions of significant components of an individual's unique world" (Guanipa, 1998). Ethnicity, on the other hand, refers to an individual's inclusion in a group of people constructed from common ancestry, appearance, nationality, culture, religion, language, regionality, or other similar characteristics (Nagel, 1994). Self-awareness within these groups is rooted in these shared charteristics among group members. Both concepts are demanding on their own, but form a much larger challenge when in combination. Guanipa (1998) defines ethnic identity as "a real awareness of self within a specific group, which is followed by a great sense of respect and pride, and… constitutes a base for the development of a healthy self-concept." This concept takes a great deal of time and effort to develop and is something that has been of particular interest to me over the last several years.

Thesis Overview and Goals

I am Hispanic/Latino. Though the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" carry different social and ethnic connotations, they are often used interchangeably in research conducted in the United States as well as in many social contexts and will continue through the course of this exploration. These terms are unique to the United States and are used to describe persons of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish origin or decent, regardless of race. Hispanic/Latino is the only ethnicity officially recognized by the United States Census. Their meaning continues to change and evolve, though, as American society adapts to the needs of different ethnic groups (Taylor, Lopez, Martínez & Velasco, 2012). Specifically how my heritage fits into this category will be discussed later in this exploration. However, to leave my story at that would be a disservice to both my family and myself. If someone were to dig just a little deeper, she would find that I am of mixed ethnic heritage and have struggled with my ethnic identity for my entire life.

According to the 2008 census, there are approximately 5.2 million multiracial individuals like myself in the United States. This accounted for approximately 5% of the nation's minority population at that time ("Multiracial America is," 2009). More recently, 2010's census had over 9 million people select multiple races or ethnicities, and current estimates show individuals of mixed heritage to be the fastest growing demographic group in the nation (Townsend, Wilkins, Fryberg & Markus, 2012; Saulny, 2011). This trend of mixed or blended heritage, as in my case, lends itself to the findings of recent research, which show a weakening of genetic ethnic boundaries in the United States. Seemingly in contrast, many of these same studies also found evidence of increased

ethnic identification (Nagel, 1994). Furthermore, "...very often we may find adolescents with more than one ethnic identity" (Guanipa, 1998).

The aim of this thesis is to explore and explain. As Hispanics take the lead as the nation's leading ethnic minority group and "mixed" or interracial marriages become a more common occurrence—one in seven marriages reported from 2008 to 2009 occurring between spouses of different ethnicities and the number of multiethnic individuals in this country continues to rise—it is vitally important that we understand the significance and function of ethnic identity, and specifically multiethnic identity, as it affects general identity development and wellbeing. Through this thesis, I will explore ethnic identity development with particular emphasis on the experiences of the Hispanic minority population and breathe life into theory by explaining my own process and experiences with identity development.

General Identity Development

The struggle for a sense of identity is a lifelong process, but tends to be most keen during adolescence (Guanipa, 1998; La Guardia, 2009; Nagel, 1994; Umaña-Taylor, Diversi & Fine, 2002; Weiten, 2010) and early adulthood (age 18-25; Weiten, 2010). Turbulent changes in cognitive, moral, social and physical development during this period are further compounded by strides in emotion and personality development, particularly with dramatic changes in the process of identity development. Weiten (2010) sites countless studies on identity formation and its implications, with particular emphasis on the personality research of Erik Erikson and James Marcia. Erikson describes the formation of a clear sense of identity as a search to answer the questions "Who am I?" and "Where am I going in life?" while Marcia describes four different "identity statuses"

that can come about as a result of an individual's commitment (to things such as life goals, values, etc.) and sense of crisis (active questioning and exploration) during the search for identity: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. Marcia's theory describes identity achievement as the ultimate goal and defines it as "arriving at a sense of self and direction after some consideration of alternative possibilities. Identity achievement is associated with higher self-esteem, conscientiousness, security, achievement, motivation, and capacity for intimacy" (La Guardia, 2009; Weiten, 2010; 356). Reaching this level of identity development is obviously a lengthy and involved process; it appears to be particularly difficult for adolescents belonging to minority ethnic groups, such as Hispanics or Latinos (Guanipa, 1998).

Ethnic Identity

The search for identity advances rapidly during adolescence and young adulthood, so it makes sense then that ethnic and cultural exploration follows suit (Guanipa, 1998; Torres & Ong, 2010). Nagel (1994) states that "...the origin, content, and form of ethnicity reflect the creative choices of individuals and groups as they define themselves and others in ethnic ways" (152), again suggesting the ongoing development of identity throughout the lifetime. Though an individual's identity is ultimately a self-developed concept rather than one imposed by societal stereotypes (Guanipa, 1998), ascriptions about individuals' ethnicities made by others often influence the individuals' own self-concepts. Furthermore, Umaña-Taylor, Diversi and Fine (2002) found that inclusion in ethnic minority groups, rather than inclusion in the majority group, poses extra challenges in the process of identity development.

Identity formation. Much like general identity development, an individual's ethnic identity is formed through many processes and components. One's ethnic identity is thought to evolve from the individual's self-concept, which is formed from commitment (group belonging and attachment) to and exploration (seeking out information) of one's particular ethnic group (Torres & Ong, 2010). These two components also affect the strength of an individual's identity, but like identity itself, ethnicity is prone to change over time. Nagel (1994) states that "...ethnic boundaries are continuously negotiated, revised, and revitalized, both by ethnic group members themselves as well as by outside observers" (153). Besides the self-generated concept, physical appearance and social environment are two important factors shaping how an individual claims identity (Townsend, Wilkins, Fryberg & Markus, 2012). This combination of internal and external influences contributes to the intensity and flexibility of one's ethnic identification.

Strength and fluctuation. Individuals' perceptions of themselves with regard to ethnicity tend to be situational and changeable. Since one's ethnic identity is a composite view generated by both internal and external forces, it is likely to show variation to fit different circumstances and audiences, as well as to show the same fluctuation over time that is shown by overall identity (Nagel, 1994; Torres & Ong, 2010). Additionally, ethnic identity appears to be more salient for minority group members than for those who are members of the majority ethnic group. The effect is reversed, however, when members from the majority are in a setting where their ethnic group is the numerical minority (Umaña-Taylor, Diversi & Fine, 2002). Majority group members appear to face a different type of choice with regard to ethnicity—one that is far more restrictive.

Individuals who identify as "White" are typically of Western or other European ancestry and face different socially-constructed ethnic identification choices based on the color of their skin or other physical attributes.

Researchers have also found that many minority group members display more fluctuation of identity across the lifespan and between generations, likely as a function of acculturation processes and influences, which are believed to occur when groups with different cultural backgrounds come into first-hand contact with each other and generate changes in either or both groups (Umaña-Taylor, Diversi & Fine, 2002). La Guardia (2009) asserts that "...people acquire multiple identities across the lifespan, and life transitions (whether developmentally normative or imposed) demand that people to take on new challenges, consider how to integrate new activities, roles, and relationships, and ultimately grapple with how they conceive of themselves" (90). This results in a fluid interpretation of how one identifies ethnically and behaves socially, since ethnicity is a social construct rather than a biological fact. "Even when ancestry can be proven, questions can arise about the cultural depth of the individual's ethnicity..." (Nagel, 1994; 160), as will be discussed below. However, no matter what state of ethnic development an individual may be in, it is important for the individual to integrate ethnic identities with a personal identity in order to achieve a stable self-concept, again emphasizing the importance of personal exploration in developing perceptions of one's self (Guanipa, 1998).

Semantics. As previously discussed, ethnic identity depends on both internal and external prescriptions and tends to fluctuate in different social situations. An individual may change the language used to describe him or herself to fit different environments or

group dynamics, such as a man of Hispanic heritage identifying himself as "Mexican" in a group of people with Hispanic heritage in San Antonio, TX, or the same man identifying as "Hispanic" with a group of individuals of Western European heritage in Indianapolis, IN (Nagel, 1994). However, this choice of descriptors also depends on personal preferences. Taylor, Lopez, Martínez & Velasco (2012) found that 51% of Hispanics in the United States prefer to describe their identity using their family's country of origin (i.e., "Mexican" or "Colombian") rather than using pan-ethnic terms such as "Hispanic" or "Latino" (24%) or "American" (21%). Of those who employ pan-ethnic expressions, "Hispanic" (33%) is preferred to "Latino" (14%).

In ultimately deciding which words to use to describe one's own ethnic heritage, the individual must determine what each descriptor means to different audiences, in different social contexts, and if there are any benefits or drawbacks in diverse situations. "The origin, content, and form of ethnicity reflect the creative choices of individuals and groups as they define themselves and others in ethnic ways" (Nagel, 1994). For Hispanics, such diversity of descriptors stems from a general agreement that Hispanics in the United States share similar, but not the same, cultures and do not fit into the standard racial categories used by the U.S. Census Bureau. "Hispanic/Latino" is in fact the only formally recognized ethnic group in the census (Taylor, Lopez, Martínez & Velasco, 2012)

Monoethnic versus multiethnic. Choosing a term to describe ethnic identity is more than simple semantics, as it is also a choice to acknowledge (or not to acknowledge) heritage. This issue is particularly pertinent for individuals such as myself, who have mixed heritage and must decide whether to identify with multiple ethnic groups, only one

ethnic group, or to refer to a pan-ethnic term. Referring again to Nagel's research (1994), how an individual identifies is a reflection of a creative preference—a cognizant choice to be seen and perceived a certain way both internally and externally. This can be especially difficult for individuals who identify as racially White, since "White" may indicate one or any combination of ancestries (traditionally referring to heritage from Western European cultures; Nagel, 1994).

Personal preferences, however, can be hard to measure, thus we look to external influences to gain a better understanding of why individuals may identify as monoethnic versus multiethnic. As previously discussed, appearance and social context tend to hold particular significance in determining ethnic identity. "Specifically, among people who are half-White/half-minority, those who look White and those who are from predominantly White environments are more likely to identify as biracial than as monoracial." (Townsend, Wilkins, Fryberg & Markus, 2012; 92). This trend shows some variation depending on the ethnic groups. Townsend, Wilkins, Fryberd & Markus (2012) found that individuals of mixed Asian and White heritage were more likely to identify as biracial than both Latino/White and Black/White individuals, who typically identify with their minority ethnic heritage. This may be due to the changing social status of Blacks and Latinos in American society, though more research is needed before any hypothesis can be formed. Additionally, individuals ascribed to higher social status groups are more likely to claim a bi- or multiethnic identity than those belonging to a lower status group. "Middle-class participants were more likely than working-class participants to identify as biracial than monoracial-minority" (95). This rise in multiethnic identities has led some to believe that a new racial group is forming in the United States. Saulny (2011) asserts

that this is not the case, as an interview with Professor Rainier Spencer, director of the Afro-American Studies Program at the University of Nevada, concluded that "the mixed-race identity is not a transcendence of race, it's a new tribe. A Balkanization of race."

Advantages and disadvantages. As with any psychological development, establishing a secure ethnic identity comes with its fair share of benefits—both psychologically and socially. A study conducted by Torres and Ong (2010) found that "ethnic identity offers an important set of resources that may serve as a buffer from the adverse psychological effects of discrimination-related stress" (561). The same study also concluded that commitment to ethnic identity offers a safeguard against the effects of discrimination among Latinos living in the United States. It remains unclear if this protection associated with belonging is due to the social or the psychological advantages related to Hispanic culture. Regardless, advancing an individual's commitment to a specific ethnic identity (particularly within a minority group) appears to aid resistance to psychological stressors from discrimination and depression. Additionally, securely identifying with an ethnic group may benefit several aspects of an adolescent's life, including self-esteem and psychosocial adjustment (Umaña-Taylor, Diversi & Fine, 2002). Socially, claiming a secure ethnic background is now a rational choice. Nagel (1994) cites the construction of ethnic boundaries or adoption of particular ethnic identities as potentially part of a strategy to gain political or economic advantages, either personally or for the collective group. Advantages of this type might include political influence, improved access to government or private resources, or even personal access to grants or scholarships available only to members of certain ethnic groups.

For minority adolescents, the complications of ethnic identity formation arise

from various issues, such as "...skin color [or other physical attributes], language differences, behavioral patterns, cultural values and norms, social stereotypes, parents' misconceptions, and fears" (Guanipa, 1998). Any inconsistency with a group norm may cause psychological stress, as the individual may feel it interferes with satisfying the need to belong to a group (Weiten, 2010). Torres and Ong (2010) assert that even simple exploration of ethnic identity may lend itself to greater vulnerability to the effects of discrimination. However, "... research reveals that denying biracially identified individuals the ability to choose a biracial identity is associated with lower self-esteem and decreased motivational outcomes" (Townsend, Wilkins, Fryberg & Markus, 2012; 91), reinforcing the idea that a secure identity lends itself to improved coping and mental health.

Umaña-Taylor, Diversi, and Fine (2002) assert that the changes imposed on ethnic minority groups, such as Latinos, in the United States are a result of acculturation generate a bicultural ethnic identity, in which an individual identifies with both his or her own ethnic group as well as the mainstream group. Researchers have identified this bicultural self-concept as well as other multiracial or multiethnic identities as the healthiest and most beneficial form of ethnic identity, as it allows for greater adaptability and reduced feelings of isolation from both one's particular ethnic group and the majority group in the United States (Townsend, Wilkins, Fryberg & Markus, 2012; Umaña-Taylor, Diversi & Fine, 2002).

Ethnicity and Culture

In addition to personal preference, social ascriptions, and rational analysis, culture is another important component to ethnic identity formation. While ethnicity may be

strictly defined as genetic heritage or shared ancestry, it is impossible to remove a group of people from their way of life. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society." Nagel (1994) cites culture as providing the content and meaning of ethnicity, explaining that even when an individual's heritage can be proven, the cultural depth of an individual's ethnic roots may still be questioned. As previously discussed, secure identity is achieved through exploration of one's values, goals and beliefs, and through adherence to a path that follows those values (Umaña-Taylor, Diversi & Fine, 2002). "Culture dictates the appropriate and inappropriate content of a particular ethnicity and designates the language, religion, belief system, art, music, dress, traditions, and lifeways that constitute an authentic ethnicity" (Nagel, 1994; 161). Thus, culture is what gives ethnicity it's meaning.

The concept is simple enough, but the practice, as always, is much more complex. Among Hispanics in the United States, 69% believe that their ethnic group is composed of many different cultures as opposed to sharing one common culture (Taylor, Lopez, Martínez & Velasco, 2012). The Pew Research Center (2009) found that 42% of young Latinos are brought up in families that place strong emphasis on their particular Latin American root. This cultural confusion is only amplified for individuals of mixed ethnic and cultural backgrounds since being multicultural or multiethnic demands developing a sense of self in two or more cultural or ethnic groups simultaneously. This remains dependent on whether the individual perceives him or herself as multicultural. "Developing ethnic and racial identities whether with mixed ethnic and racial ancestry or

across multiple cultural contexts (e.g., home and school), is a dynamic, lifelong process." (Marks, Patton & Coll, 2011; 271).

Conclusion

Ethnic identification is a difficult and extensive process. To become ethnically self-aware, an individual must tackle the already daunting task of asking "Who Am I?" and place it in the context of culture and ethnic heritage: Who am I? Where do I come from? And where am I going? Tradition calls for a singular answer to the question of ethnicity, but modern societal shifts show an even increasing demographic of mixed and multiethnic individuals who must also find a way to identify themselves. Currently, many of these individuals still describe themselves in monoethnic terms: President Obama checked only one box—Black—on the 2010 census even though he could have checked both Black and White as his racial and ethnic identifiers (Saulny, 2011). Research shows that denying (or being denied) multiethnic identification may lead to psychological distress. The existence of identity as both a self-prescribed definition and a socially assigned description furthers the idea of identity as an individual's unique experience, dependent on personal preferences as much as external influences. At the end of the day, only Mr. Obama can accurately explain why he ethnically identifies himself as Black and not another singular term or combination of terms. Now that we have reviewed the literature of self-concept formation, perhaps the telling of my ethnic identity development will shed a different light on the issue.

Ethnic Identity Exploration

The first time I discussed my heritage with nonfamily members was in a family tree presentation in fourth grade. I remember being fascinated with everything I had

learned about the various places my family had been, and excited to share what I had found. Two years later, I experienced the first of many episodes of identity confusion: a normal standardized test asked for my ethnicity in the demographics section and I did not know what to put. For the first and last time, I selected only the "White" option, and it was soon after that that I began to think of myself as Hispanic.

I suppose on some level I always knew that my ethnic heritage was different. I knew my roots from a young age, when my mother would tell me stories of how her father came to the United States and about how my paternal grandmother had come to America on a boat and quickly fallen in love. As a little girl, I loved these stories, but I had no concept of how they might later affect how I would come to define myself. As Nagel (1994) said, "ethnic identity is both optional and mandatory." For me, it has been a continuous struggle that shows no signs of letting up. My ethnic identity is constantly changing, but it is permanently part of who I am and who I aim to be.

Paternal Heritage

My paternal heritage is "White" according to the definition allotted by American mainstream culture. My paternal grandfather was of Scottish decent, while my paternal grandmother was a first-generation American from Germany who came to the United States in the early 1930s to escape growing tensions in her hometown. This combination of Western European heritages places my paternal ethnicity squarely in the realm of majority American "White." However, my grandparents' deaths and my father's disinterest in his own heritage have resulted in a weakened connection with my Scottish and German roots. Though I have done a fair amount of research into the history of these

communities, I have not had the opportunity to truly experience these cultures or to fully explore my white ethnicity.

Being White came easily to me as a child since my physical appearance matches expectations: I have light skin, freckles, and red hair. It is possible that the ease with which I acquired this social ascription explains why White is my secondary ethnic identity—I have never had to defend it so I have always felt secure in this part of my identity, allowing me to focus instead on the challenging aspect. The only contention I have experienced with this side of my ethnicity is the occasional individual resolute in the idea that my red hair was indicative of Irish heritage, despite my attempts to offer corrections. Though I continue to know comparatively little about my White heritage, that seems to group me with the majority of other White individuals—everyone knows they are white, and perhaps what specific countries their family may have come from, but that is where the knowledge stops. As far as cultural, linguistic, or other connections to ethnicity, they are seemingly nonexistent for a great majority of young White Americans.

Maternal Heritage

My maternal heritage is Hispanic/Latino. My maternal grandfather was born in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, and travelled to the United States as a young adult in search of economic opportunity. My maternal grandmother, on the other hand, has both Mexican and Spanish roots, and can trace her family's presence in southern Texas back to the first half of the 19th century. This is the side of my family that I am closest with, so identifying as Hispanic has always felt right. I never had the opportunity to meet my grandfather due to his untimely death, but my grandmother's influence when I was a young girl had a lasting impact. I remember all of the wonderful foods she would prepare

for me after school—more *arroz con pollo* and *lengua* than I could ever eat—and always being fascinated when she would effortlessly switch from English to Spanish when speaking with friends and family members.

If I were to define myself by my family's country of origin, as many individuals of Hispanic descent are wont to do, I would be Mexican, as this is how my mother describes herself. However, given my maternal family's roots in two different countries and my physical appearance described previously, I have always been more comfortable with the pan-ethnic term "Hispanic." However, even selecting a less specific term to describe myself has been challenging. I am a third generation American, raised in a Mexican family in San Antonio, TX, where the majority of the population is of Hispanic descent. But I am pale and have red hair. This has ensured that my Hispanic identity has not come easily. The fourth grade family tree presentation that I described in the opening to this section was not only the first time I discussed my heritage with others, but also the first time that I had to defend it. So while the Hispanic culture has been the side of my ethnicity that I have always felt most aligned with emotionally, it has always been a difficult one to claim socially.

Multiethnic Identity

To say that I am multiethnic is one thing, but to actually identify myself as such is a different story. It has taken me up until my young adulthood to begin identifying myself as multiethnic. Previously, internally perceiving myself as "mixed" and outwardly describing myself as Hispanic has been my preferred identity. However, after four years of college and a great deal of research, this self-concept has begun to lose its luster.

Finding ethnicity. My ethnic identity development really began with that family tree project in fourth grade, since that was the first time that I began actively searching for who and what I am. Nagel (1994) described the propensity for one's identity to change over time or in certain situations. So how I see myself today is certainly not the same way that I identified myself in the past, and will likely not be exactly the same as how I identify in the future. When I was younger, I saw myself as "White," something that I understood as a sort of ambiguous term to define anything that doesn't come directly from the Asian or African continent—and according to the U.S. Census I identified correctly, since Hispanic/Latino is considered an ethnic subcategory of White. As I got older, I began to define myself as Hispanic.

My commitment and exploration of Hispanic ethnicity began my freshman year in high school. My maternal grandmother had recently passed away and I was experiencing another moment of ethnic confusion. My mother and aunts all identify as Mexican, but my grandmother was my rock; I believe the heightening of my identity exploration came as a direct response to losing her influence in my daily life. It was at this opportune time in my life when an organization called the National Hispanic Institute (NHI) presented at my high school about a program to explore Hispanic community issues and initiatives, and I jumped at the chance. Working with NHI over the next five years greatly strengthened my Hispanic ethnic identification and gave me a great sense of pride in my roots. However, even in this setting where I felt fully immersed in Hispanic culture, I still struggled with my identity: I became NHI's white poster child of sorts, recruiting non-Hispanic potential members. I never minded the work, but I always felt disconnected, as if my physical appearance made me less Latina. Others' looks of disbelief when I

delivered my opening line did not help either: "Hi, my name is Juliana Abercrombie, *y soy latina*."

With college came a renewed fervor. I had been named a National Hispanic Scholar as a graduating senior, so I entered school for my undergrad with an immediate need to represent my Hispanic heritage on my new campus at Ball State University (and in my new state of Indiana). I enrolled in Spanish and diversity classes and began working with different professors and administrators in an attempt to increase the Hispanic presence on campus. Internally, this was also my way of asserting myself as Hispanic in a new environment. My efforts and involvement on campus then led to another opportunity to represent myself ethnically in a very public way as my university asked me to serve as the face of the Spanish-language advertisement campaign in Indianapolis, IN. This opportunity was a huge step for me, as my school's confidence in me as a representation of my Hispanic ethnicity (not my White appearance) to other members of the Latino community affirmed what I had always felt: *yo soy latina*. I then took another step in declaring my heritage by electing to major in Spanish and spending a summer studying abroad in Segovia, Castilla-y-Leon, Spain. This was an opportunity to fulfill a dream I had had since childhood: to be fluent in Spanish, just like my grandmother. These experiences finally gave me the confidence I had been looking for. I finally felt recognized as Hispanic, and that I no longer had to constantly prove myself. This gave me the freedom to begin identifying with both my minority and majority ethnic cultures, and began the process of composing this thesis.

Conclusion

Ethnic identity is a complex concept that asks challenging questions and requires bold answers. Every individual is called upon to identify an ethnicity, whether that be through a fervent pride and outward expression of that self-concept or a quiet internal knowledge of who the individual is and where he or she comes from. Throughout the life and different social situations, identity is likely to change and adapt. The most important piece, though, is that this malleable ethnic identity formation is incorporated into the natural development of the individual's overall identity.

My ethnic identity formation has been quite a ride, but I am happy where I am now. At this stage in my life, I still identify primarily as Hispanic, but view myself and describe myself demographically as multiethnic. I am Hispanic, Mexican, Spanish, German, Scottish, White, and American. My ethnic identity fluctuates some with my mood, my situation, and my audience, but my roots are always constant. I know where I come from and this gives me the confidence to continue moving forward.

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